Trucial Oman MK4

162, 166, 619, 101, 622, 361, 438

/For an account of the settled tribes of Oman and the Trucial Coast in 1920--territory occupied, rulers, brief history, their settlements, means of livelihood, etc. see 30: Great Britain, Saudi Arabia MJ1, category 116, pp. 546-602./

1: Melamid K-4 (no date) 1953 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4 • Qatar MK3

tively recent, since none of the earlier observers comment much on them. Wood and sailcloth for boats have to be imported from a distance, a situation that may have seriously hampered these occupations in the past. In view of the absence of a hinterland and the poverty of the shore, there seems to have been little opportunity for trade. Recently the export (probably smuggled) to Iran of imported sugar and textiles is reported to have grown, but no statistics are available.

Armed interference with the ships plying the ancient trade routes from India and East Africa to Basra and the West through the Strait of Hormuz and the narrow funnel of the Persian Gulf was the major source of income for the inhabitants. The area became known as the "Pirate Coast," a name still found on many maps. Attacks on British ships took place as late as 1905, and the attack on a large Arab dhow in 1944 has been reported.[4] Prevention of piracy would have required the constant presence of relatively large fleets to block the many inlets into which the pirates could withdraw their small ships. An alternative would have been the occupation of the whole coast—a costly procedure, and hardly worth while economically. Therefore trading powers in the Persian Gulf, such as the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the Moslem empires before and after, limited their repression of piracy to occasional raids ashore in which one or two main pirate strongholds would be captured and held for a short time. Obviously, such measures were neither effective nor permanent.

From the end of the eighteenth century on, British trade in the Persian Gulf became increasingly important, and after many vicissitudes a British fleet was dispatched in 1819–1820 to punish and eliminate the pirates. After the usual bombardments the sheikhs of the coast were made to sign a solemn agreement not to fight one another; this was supposed to remove the main cause of piracy. Further, they promised to refrain themselves from piracy and to suppress it among their subjects. However, as soon as the British fleet withdrew, the agreement was broken. After another show of British arms, another treaty was signed by the sheikhs in 1835. Unlike the earlier agreement, the covenant of 1835 did not provide for universal peace, but only for a maritime truce: the sheikhs agreed not to fight one another on the sea, or to engage themselves, or permit their subjects to engage, in piracy—war on land was still permitted. In return, the British government agreed not to interfere in the internal affairs of the sheikhdoms, including their many land wars. Perhaps because of this unique outlet for the energies of the sheikhs

[4] For example, by O'Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 116

1: Melamid K-4 (no date) 1953 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4
Qatar MK3

and their subjects, assisted by the occasional vigilance of British cruisers and sloops, piracy ceased, and since the 1850's the coast (except for Qatar) has been known as the "Trucial Coast," and the sheikhdoms collectively as "Trucial 'Oman," though there exists no political connection between the sheikhdoms of the coast and the sultanate of Muscat and 'Oman to the east.

Slave trading in natives of the coast, other Arabs, and Africans, and also gunrunning, long a subsidiary occupation, became predominant after the establishment of the maritime truce. Before the end of the nineteenth century Great Britain was forced to make another series of treaties with the sheikhs outlawing these practices.[5] In return for small subsidies, the sheikhs were prohibited from granting concessions for mining operations or bunkering stations to nationals of other states except with the approval of the British government. Further, British officials stationed in the area of the Persian Gulf obtained the right to supervise any foreign nationals entering or residing in the area of the sheikhs. These clauses were supposed to guarantee Great Britain against the threatened acquisition of bases by France, Russia, and Germany, which would have disturbed British naval dominance in the Indian Ocean. By means of these treaties the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf became virtual British protectorates in all matters of international concern, but without British military occupation or civilian administration. The British Indian rupee gradually became the currency in use along the coast; in the interior the Maria Theresa dollar is more acceptable.

In accordance with the policy of nonintervention in internal affairs, Great Britain recognizes no boundaries between the sheikhdoms. Trucial sheikhs are therefore able to attack and absorb one another's territory without restriction, and, similarly, new Trucial sheikhdoms can emerge if they agree to the provisions of the treaties. For example, the 1820 agreement was signed by eight local sheikhs (exclusive of the sheikh of Bahrein, signing for Qatar), but only six were left to sign the 1835 treaty. In 1914, only five sheikhdoms were reported to exist,[6] and today the number seems to be seven Trucial sheikhdoms and one sheikhdom, Fujaira, outside the Trucial treaties (Table I). The fate of the vanished sheikhdoms is unknown. As Sir Percy Cox[7]

[5] It should be noted that these treaties refer only to the external relations of the region. Therefore slavery of natives is exclusively subject to local law and custom and is independent of the treaty relation with Great Britain. Several recent reports mention the existence of slavery in the region but without citing definite cases. Nothing is known of the extent of the slavery, its conditions, or its economic importance.

[6] For example, in Peace Handbooks, Vol. 13, Foreign Office, Historical Section, London, 1920, p. 43.

[7] Some Excursions in Oman, *Geogr. Journ.*, Vol. 66, 1925, pp. 193–227; reference on p. 200.

p xv

INTRODUCTION

000 BEFORE the 1914–18 war, few European travellers ventured into Arabia, which was nominally under Turkish domination. Soon after the Armistice, following the fall of the Arabian ports on the Red Sea brought about by Colonel Lawrence and Hussein, the Emir of Mecca, and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the Near East, engineers began to build roads through the deserts which only caravans had previously crossed. In 1920, Nairn, an Englishman, established a regular 'bus service from Damascus to Baghdad; to-day services connect Jerusalem and Beyrout with the Tigris, and four-engined aircraft operated by the British and American air forces fly over the ancient ways of Babylon and Ophir.

The desert has yielded many of its secrets, and the huge oil refineries at Abadan, once a sleepy Arab port at the northern extremity of the Persian Gulf, belch forth black smoke into the azure desert sky. Yet little beyond the fringe of Arabia has been exploited by the white man, and vast tracts of the Hedjaz, Nejd and Hadramaut have never heard the voice of a foreigner. The British Isles could be engulfed in the formidable desert of Dahna, the least-known region in the world, whilst apart from the crossings of Mr. St. John Philby and Mr. Bertram Thomas, the Rub-al-Khali, stretching from Aden to Oman, with a width of a thousand miles, is a dead and waterless land comprising nearly one-third of the Arabian continent.

To many people Arabia is but a name conjuring up visions of stony deserts, camels and oases, and childhood memories of Haroun-al-Raschid, and though most of us are familiar with the sack-shaped country which divides India from Africa, lying between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, few could identify a particular region.
101 It is, therefore, advisable, in reading this book, to study a large-scale map of Arabia showing the small promontory, at the south-east extremity of the country and between the Persian and the Oman Gulfs, which is known geographically as the Trucial Oman Coast. The name 'Trucial' was first suggested by a naval officer, Captain

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

101 Brideaux, in the last century. Formerly this part of the coast was known in English official literature as 'The Pirate Coast', on account of the prevalence of piracy in these waters, although the Arabs call it *Sahil 'Oman* (Oman Coast) or *Shamal*, after the hot north wind which blows across the Gulf.

148 175 In 1853, a Treaty or 'Truce' was signed between the British Government and the five principalities—Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Umm-al-Quwain and Sharjah. This 'perpetual truce' provided for the entire cessation of liabilities at sea amongst the signatories and imposed on the British Government the duty of enforcing peace, and obtaining reparation for maritime aggression committed in contravention of the agreement. The sheikhs are, therefore, styled 'Trucial Sheikhs'.

A second treaty was signed in 1892, by which the sheikhs bound themselves not to enter into any agreement or correspondence with any power other than the British Government; not to permit without the sanction of the British Government the residence within their territory of the agent of any other government, and not to sell, cede, mortgage or otherwise give for occupation, any part of their territories, save to the British Government.

By these two treaties preferential, and almost exclusive relations were created between the British Government and the Trucial chiefs, and the former appears to assume the moral obligation to protect the sheikhs in so far as they may be endangered or disabled from defending themselves. It should be noted that, under the treaty of 1853, the trucial obligations of the sheikhs only extend to their maritime activities and not to the interior of their domains.

131 101 There is some disagreement amongst geographers as to the definition of the term 'Oman', which in some maps is made to cover the whole of the promontory as far east as Muscat. In practice, the Trucial Oman coast is that territory which lies to the west and south of the Western Hajar mountains, including the Shamailiyah range, and extends almost to Qatar and the Ar Rimal section of the Rub-al-Khali desert. East of the Hajar mountains, on the Gulf of Oman, the country is known as Oman, and is under the rule of the Sultan of Muscat, although sometimes the term Oman is applied to the whole of this promontory.

131 Upon the coast, Trucial Oman extends in the Gulf of Oman from Khor Kalba to Dubai, and in the Persian Gulf from Sha'am to Khor-al-Odaid. Inland its frontiers are more difficult to define, but they cover a considerable portion of the interior of the Oman

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

all the fun that he could out of desert life, yet he worked exceedingly hard and devoted several hours each day to the study of Arabic.

Tandy had been instructed to pay a visit to Djaidh to discuss with the tribal leaders the continuation of work on the wells which irrigate the large date plantations for which this district is famous. Djaidh, which is not a village but a district, lies about fifty miles east of Sharjah on the direct camel route, but the sand tracks are extremely soft for vehicular traffic and Tandy had chosen a circular route by way of Falat-al-'Ali and Muraq-quibat, where the road is reasonably good and has a hard surface. It added twenty miles to the journey, but the extra comfort and ease of travel compensated for this.

I had been invited to join the party, since Captain Tandy had expectations of meeting Sheikh Mahommed bin Ali, ruler of the wild Beni Quitab tribe of Bedouins. I had often expressed a wish to see this chief, whose fierceness and bold character were celebrated in Oman; I never expected to have this privilege, for the Beni Quitab lived in remote and inaccessible parts of the desert, mostly at the foothills of the Jebel-al-Faiyah range, and were continually changing their camping-ground. It was reported, moreover, that they were hostile to foreigners and that Sheikh Mahommed had met only two Europeans, one of them being Sir Geoffrey Prior, the British Resident, who had difficulty in finding him. Arabs are very chary of giving information to foreigners concerning the whereabouts of Bedouin tribes, presumably because they fear reprisals.

Owing to the waterless nature of Oman—which is, geographically, merely a coastal extension of the Great Southern Desert, or Rub-al-Khali—date plantations of any appreciable size are rare. On the Oman Gulf side of the peninsula, and at Muscat, they flourish to such an extent that their export forms one of the staple industries of this part of south-east Arabia, but west of the Shimailiyah the only large plantations are at Falaj-al-'Ali and Djaidh, where their ownership is shared by the tribes in common. Djaidh is neutral territory, but the responsibility for managing the plantations is divided between the Sheikhs of Sharjah and Kalba; the Sheikh of Ras-al-Khaimah is responsible for the plantations at Falaj-al-'Ali, although the Sheikh of Umm-al-Quwain has some interest in this plantation. The district is inhabited by Kalba tribesmen, who live in encampments near the wells; they are responsible, through their headmen or sub-chiefs, for the maintenance of the irrigation

travellers had declared did not exist in Oman. There was no road and the ground was hard and very bumpy, full of holes and nullahs. Tall grasses and shrubs grew in profusion, including *shinan* and the sea-green *harm* as well as some *Hadh* bushes, indicative of recent rain or heavy dews. The yellow flowers of the *zahr* blossomed in abundance, attracting myriads of insects, whilst several hares darted ahead of our truck and scurried away into their holes. The acacia (*samr*) trees grew in thin copses and were frequently fifteen feet high, which is unusual in this part of the desert.

When we had traversed five miles of this wooded country without so much as a trace of human life, our guides became nervous and begged to be allowed to return to Djaidh. We let them go, giving them a handful of biscuits and some tobacco as a gift, but before they left us they pointed to a site some two miles ahead where, they said, the *Badu* had last encamped. When we came upon this site we did, indeed, find the remains of a camp, the grass being lighter in patches than the surrounding herbage, whilst nearby was an old well and the dead embers of a fire. But of the *Badu* there was no sign.

We sat on a hillock for a few minutes, drinking tea, while Tandy and Williamson made a survey of the land; there were no tracks to guide us and nothing to indicate where the *Badu* might have concealed themselves. Sheikh Hâmid, an amusing raconteur, recounted tales of the Beni Quitab tribe. These nomads number several thousand and, split into various sections, they roam all over the Oman country; branches of this tribe are to be found in the Nejd and Kuwait, but these have separate sheikhs and do not owe allegiance to Mohammed bin Ali. They are a wild, simple people, despising both the town dwellers and those who work with their hands. They live on dates, which they mostly steal, camels' milk, fish and rice. Some of these commodities they are obliged to buy, and the money for this purpose they obtain by selling camels, animal skins, including wolves, lizard and ibex; donkeys, wild honey, cheese and gazelle meat.

The Beni Quitab are famous camel breeders and during our trip across the *Marbakh* we saw large herds of these animals with their calves. They also breed donkeys, capturing the wild asses when young, and gather wild honey from the plains. Although they do as little work as possible, they cultivate small patches of ground to which they return twice a year, growing millet and tobacco, which they smoke in tiny pipes with cane stems.

3: Melamid S-3 (no date) 1954 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

rural and town populations there is a constant proportion of two to one. The average distance between "dorps" (villages with a population of some 2000) is 72 miles, and each dorp serves an average area of 2696 square miles. In contrast, a population center of about the same size in the canton of Zurich serves an average area of only 20 square miles. The wide-mesh distribution and great distances between central services are both costly and inconvenient and are only partly offset by the fact that every farm is able to supply its working population with essential foods such as corn and with tobacco. The present trend in the Karroo is a scientific attempt to adapt the economy more closely to the environment.—DONALD R. PETTERSON

ASIA

OIL AND THE EVOLUTION OF BOUNDARIES IN EASTERN ARABIA. Since my research for the paper on the "Political Geography of Trucial 'Oman and Qatar" (*Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 43, 1953, pp. 194–206) was completed, hopes for the discovery of oil have led to further developments in the evolution of states and boundaries in eastern Arabia.

In Trucial 'Oman the maritime truces and treaties with Great Britain oblige the sheikhs (the so-called "Trucial sheikhs") to enforce the agreements (for example, suppression of slave trade) in their own territories. In the neutral areas of Trucial 'Oman no Trucial sheikh has any authority, yet Great Britain cannot enforce the treaties either, for they leave all affairs on land exclusively in the hands of the sheikhs. These shortcomings, particularly significant today in matters of oil concessions and development, have caused the abandonment of the concept of neutral areas in Trucial 'Oman. Such areas are now considered to be part of the territory of one or another of the Trucial sheikhs, who are thus able to exercise their authority. For similar reasons the Trucial sheikhdom of Kalba, the subject of many disputes, is no longer recognized; its former territory is now parceled among other Trucial sheikhdoms. The sheikhdom of Fujaira, which effectively occupies an area near the Gulf of 'Oman, has now been elevated to Trucial rank, with all rights and obligations. As the result of these developments, political conditions in Trucial 'Oman are much more stable today than ever before. This fact in itself, independent of the discovery of oil, may account for recent economic growth. The accompanying table summarizes some of the recent changes in the seven Trucial sheikhdoms of 'Oman. Additional information, particularly for the guidance of travelers, is available in the "Handbook on the Persian Gulf" published by the British Foreign Office (1953). No demarcation of boundaries between Trucial sheikhdoms has yet been reported, and since the basic political relations between the sheikhs remain the same, war may flare up at any time though in view of the recent economic changes this is believed to be less likely than before.

With the abandonment of the concept of neutral areas in Trucial 'Oman, six villages of the oasis—or, rather, group of oases—called Buraimi (Muwaiqih, Mataradh, Al Ain, Jimi, Qattara, and Hilli), inhabited by the Abu Falah tribe, are now considered to be, and are administered as, a part of Abu Dhabi. The village of Buraimi, inhabited by the Naim tribe, which is reported to graze its herds to the east of the oasis, is part of the Sultanate of Muscat and 'Oman, and thus outside Trucial 'Oman. The remaining village of the oasis, Hamasa, inhabited by the Bu Sham tribe (also reported to graze its herds southeast of the oasis), is occupied by Saudi Arabia (see Melamid, *op. cit.*, p. 204, footnote 23) and claimed

[see p. 296--Analyst]

3: Melamid S-3 (no date) 1954 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

TABLE I—SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN TRUCIAL SHEIKHDOMS

TRUCIAL SHEIKHDOM	RECENT CHANGES
ABU DHABI	The largest Trucial sheikhdom, territorially better consolidated than before. Prospecting for oil proceeds on land; oil, of a better quality than the other Arabian oils, has been discovered at Murban (about 23° 50′ N. and 53° 45′ E.), but the full significance of the discovery has not yet been evaluated. A new oil concession, to last 65 years, for the offshore subsurface rights in the Persian Gulf, as defined in the 1951 arbitration award, was granted to a combination of British (Anglo-Iranian Oil Company) and French companies in March, 1953; the area is described as exceeding 12,000 square miles (no information has been released to show how this figure was calculated); under the terms of the concession, exploration must begin within a year, and drilling within five years.
DIBAI	The town of Dibai is expanding rapidly; its population is now estimated at 38,000. Two commercial banks and a hospital have been established, and there are regular bimonthly mail-steamer connections with Iraq and India. In view of the growth of Dibai, the headquarters of the British Political Agent for Trucial 'Oman are being transferred there from Sharjah. An offshore concession described as covering 1300 square miles was granted in August, 1952, to the same group of companies that have obtained the Abu Dhabi offshore concession; the terms also are the same, except that the duration is limited to 60 years. Drilling to 12,000 feet has produced no oil so far.
SHARJAH	Probably now the second largest of the Trucial sheikhdoms; includes the inland oasis of Dhaid and the town of Kalba, on the Gulf of 'Oman. The aerodrome near the town of Sharjah is served by three flights a week from Bahrain, the only regular air service to Trucial 'Oman.
AJMAN	No change.
UMM AL QAIWAIN	" "
RAS AL KHAIMA	" "
FUJAIRA	Trucial sheikhdom since 1952; economically unimportant.

by the Sultan of Muscat and 'Oman. After some skirmishes between the troops of Saudi Arabia and British-officered Trucial 'Oman levies, a standstill agreement, similar to the Palestine armistice agreements, was reached, which stabilized for the time being the positions occupied by the various states and armies. Owing to the location of Hamasa between the other villages of the oasis, this standstill agreement has resulted in some form of blockade of the forces of Saudi Arabia there; Saudi Arabian efforts to supply Hamasa have led to further bloodshed and complaints to the United Nations. Since the oasis of Buraimi contains the only sizable wells in the eastern Rub' al Khali desert, possession of, and free access to, all or parts of it is important to anyone who desires to rule, and exploit the minerals of, the Empty Quarter of Arabia. Several suggestions for amicable settlement or arbitration of the dispute have been made, particularly by the new King of Saudi Arabia (*New York Times*, Nov. 11, 1953). In view of the importance of the oasis, definite boundaries between Saudi Arabia, Trucial 'Oman, the Sultanate of Muscat and 'Oman (in whose Dhofar region a group of American oil companies has a concession), and possibly Aden Protectorate may now be established, though the process of definition would take some time. All the oil companies operating in the states concerned have announced their agreement to any new boundaries that may be drawn.—ALEXANDER MELAMID

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

ARID ZONE RESEARCH. "Reviews of Research on Arid Zone Hydrology" (Paris, 1953) is the first fruit of UNESCO's Arid Zone Programme, which had its beginning in 1948. For study purposes the arid lands of the world were divided into eight regions—

TO 133 502 721 in two miles from their entrances. Thus it was that the pirate tribes were able to build their towns behind these natural booms, and to carry on their ruthless calling in defiance of the British and Portuguese navies — and to earn for their stronghold the much feared and romantic name, "The Pirate Coast".

TO 101 631 648 628 [527] Trucial 'Oman, as it is called today, is ruled by six independent sheikhs, bound under old treaties with Britain to maintain a maritime truce for the prevention of piracy and slave-trading. Family feuds and inter-tribal quarrelling are as common among them as are the rusty, ancient cannon. Many of the latter are no doubt from British men-o'-war, and some are still used for ceremonial occasions, a party afterwards being despatched to retrieve the cannon-balls.

TO 361 504 439 Unspoiled by time, Sharjah is one of the principal little towns, but it lacks the enchantment of Dibai, a picturesque centre a few miles along the coast to the west. A wide, shallow inlet divides Dibai and its waterfront of quaint little coffee-houses, and provides anchorage for dhows that bring transshipped goods from other continents. In the large market-place, spread on either side of the inlet and connected by a ferry-service of numerous little pole-propelled craft, the bedouin, with his henna-dyed beard and ancient rifle, can be seen fingering everything that is on show, from modern radio sets to ladies' lingerie, but he has little use for some of the strange products of the West.

TO 443 501 B 302 1111

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
Hadhramau - MM2
Oman MK1
Trucial Oman MK4
Qatar MK3
Kuwait MI1

a plateau. Except for a few oases the land is not cultivatable without the use of expensive irrigation facilities. The hills are not as high or as numerous and rainfall is not as heavy as in the areas to the west. The agriculture now consists mostly of grain and fruit crops and grazing. The half million people have not been able to subsist on the land, and they normally import substantial quantities of grain as well as staples against exports of fruits. No significant development is expected here in the near future.

THE TRUCIAL COAST

The land area along the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf from the Oman Gulf to the Qatar Peninsula known as the Trucial Coast is owned by a group of independent sheiks who have various treaties with the United Kingdom giving the British virtual control over the area. This coastline is over 400 miles long, but the country is very hot, arid, and sparsely settled. Agriculture presently is negligible and opportunities for future development are thought to be extremely limited. The great hope is that oil will be found along this coast as it has been in adjacent areas.

QATAR

Qatar, another sheikdom on the Persian Gulf which has a rather exclusive treaty with the British, is one of the oil kingdoms that has become immensely rich overnight. For this reason Qatar may become a thriving community but not an agricultural economy. The Qatar Peninsula is not very large (about 5 million acres) and is very hot, arid, sparsely settled, and, like the rest of the coast, not susceptible to any extensive agricultural development.

KUWAIT

Kuwait, the other independent coastal area on the Persian Gulf under British protectorate, is another newly-rich oil community. In fact, this is one of the largest of the oil-producing areas. Proven reserves are thought to be half as large as proven reserves in the United States. Oil royalties ($200 million annually) are being used for many community development projects including some in the agricultural field. But the small arid area (5 million acres) and limited population preclude any extensive agricultural development.

Table 48

ADEN PROTECTORATE: Acreage and Production of Principal Crops 1948 and 1949

District and Crops	1948 Acreage	1948 Production	1949 Acreage	1949 Production
	Acres	Metric Tons	Acres	Metric Tons
West Aden				
Millet and Sorghums	60,000	12,000	62,000	12,000
Other Small Millets	10,000	1,500	9,500	1,900
Wheat	1,500	750	1,500	750
Barley	4,500	2,000	4,500	2,000
Sesame	10,000	1,000	8,500	800
East Aden				
Millet and Sorghums	20,000	4,000	20,000	4,000
Other Small Millets	2,000	500	2,000	500
Wheat	2,500	2,500	2,000	2,500
Dates	10,000	5,500	10,000	5,500

Source: Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, United States Department of Agriculture.

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
Trucial Oman MK4

E. TRUCIAL OMAN

Area

This region, formerly known as the Pirate Coast, extends for more than 300 miles from the Khōr el-'Odeid on the S. frontier of El-Qatar to the S. border of Ru'ūs el-Jibāl, the northern promontory of Oman; it receives its name from the permanent truce established between the five recognized ruling Sheikhs of **Abu Dhabi, Dibai, Shārjah, 'Ajmān,** and **Umm el-Qaiwein** by the agreement of 1853 with the British Government. Ru'ūs el-Jibāl (see p. 248) is an isolated district of the Sultanate of Oman, the Trucial frontier, between Ras Sha'am on the Gulf Coast and a spot between the villages of Dibah and Bei'ah on the Gulf of Oman, cutting it off from the bulk of the Sultan's territory. From Dibah-Bei'ah the eastern frontier follows the coast for about 50 miles to a point between Khōr Kalba and Mureir, where it turns inland, first westwards, then southwards, passing N. of the districts of Mahadhah and Jau, till it reaches that of Khatam; from this point the inland boundary is the edge of the Ruba' el-Khāli and Jāfūrah deserts, running more or less parallel to the Gulf. By far the greater part of the region, therefore, consists of low country along the Persian Gulf; only at the eastern extremity is there a mountainous district formed by the spinal range of the Oman promontory. The whole western part of this great area is little known and sparsely populated, the capitals of the five principalities affected by the truce all lying in the eastern portion.

The more important land communications of Trucial Oman converge upon the Bireimi oasis (see p. 282), which is connected by various routes with Abu Dhabi, Ras el-Kheimah, Dibai, Sohār, and Hasa. Many routes cross the peninsula, linking places on the two gulfs; such are those from Dibai to Shinās, Shārjah to Mureir, Umm el-Qaiwein to Fujeirah, and Ras el-Kheimah to Dibah.

Physical Character

The coast along the Persian Gulf is low and monotonous; the hills visible from the sea in the NE. section near Ras el-Kheimah soon recede from view. To the W. of Abu Dhabi the shore is lined by a labyrinth of shoals, reefs, and islands, rendering navigation difficult even for native boats. To the E. of that place it is open, but shallow, and exposed to the full force of the *Shamāl* (NW. wind).